

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 175

E.O. 11652: GDS

AGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: GOP MOVES TO RECAPTURE CONTROL OF AGRARIAN REFORM

REF: LISBON 0069 (DTG 061556Z JAN 76)

SUMMARY: KEY PERSONNEL CHANGES IN FOUR AGRARIAN REFORM CENTERS, TOGETHER WITH APPOINTMENT OF A STUDY COMMISSION DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO SOCIALIST AGRICULTURE MINISTER LOPES CARDOSO, ARE FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO REASSERT ITS AUTHORITY OVER THE ANGOLAN REFORM PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

1. NEW PERSONNEL: MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE LOPES CARDOSO ON
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JAN 7 SWORE IN NEW DIRECTORS OF FOUR (BEJA, SANTAREM, CASTELO

BRANCO, AND PORTALEGRE) OF PORTUGAL'S SIX AGRARIAN REFORM CENTERS AND A NEW SEVEN-MEMBER ANALYSIS AND STUDY COMMISSION FOR PROBLEMS ARISING FROM APPLICATION OF AGRARIAN REFORM. THE COMMISSION COMPRISES FOUR AGRONOMISTS, INCLUDING THE CHAIRMAN, MARIO PEREIRA; TWO ARMY OFFICERS; AND A JUDGE. THE MINISTER SAID COMMISSION WILL ATTEMPT TO CLARIFY "WHAT REALLY HAPPENED" IN IMPLANTING AGRARIAN REFORM, AND TO DEAL WITH GREAT NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS THAT HAVE ARISEN FROM WHAT THE MINISTER DESCRIBED AS EXCESSES, ERRORS, AND INJUSTICES. LOPES CARDOSO SAID THE COMMISSION AND HIS MINISTRY WILL SEEK TO GIVE AGRARIAN REFORM A "DIFFERENT IMAGE." BUT HE EMPHASIZED THAT, DESPITE ERRORS, "AGRARIAN REFORM WAS UNDENIABLY ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT VICTORIES OF THE WORKING CLASSES FOLLOWING APRIL 25, 1974."

2. SHIFTS IN AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM: OTHER CHANGES AND CLARIFICATIONS OF LOPES CARDOSO'S PROGRAM AS APPROVED BY AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT AND SOCIALIST, COMMUNIST, AND POPULAR DEMOCRATIC PARTIES JANUARY 5 WERE EARLIER CONFIRMED TO AGATT BY ENG. JOAQUIM CASTRO GUERRA, LOPES CARDOSO'S CHIEF OF CABINET.

THEY INCLUDE:

- NO FARM PROPERTIES OF LESS THAN 30 HECTARES WILL BE SUBJECT TO EXPROPRIATION, EVEN IF PRODUCTIVE CAPABILITY EXCEEDS THE 50,000 POINT LIMIT ESTABLISHED BY AGRARIAN REFORM LEGISLATION (REFTEL). SMALLER PROPERTIES THAT HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED WILL BE VACATED AND RETURNED TO THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNERS.
- RIGHT OF FORMER OWNERS TO KEEP "RESERVE" PORTION OF EXPROPRIATED PROPERTIES FOR OWN USE WILL BE RESPECTED. ENG. GUERRA SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THIS RIGHT HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN ORIGINAL PROGRAM, NOT A SINGLE OWNER HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF IT BECAUSE OF "CHAOTIC WAY" IN WHICH LACE OCCUPATIONS HAD OCCURRED.
- AGRARIAN REFORM AS CURRENTLY CONCEIVED WILL BE CONFINED TO SOUTHERN PART OF COUNTRY PLUS DISTRICTS ADJOINING LISBON, SANTAREM, AND CASTELO BRANCO.
- ALGARVE WILL BE EXCLUDED EXCEPT FOR SMALL AREA NEAR FARO.
- EXISTENCE OF COLLECTIVE FARMS WILL BE FORMALLY RECOGNIZED BY GOP, BUT LEGAL STATUS OF THESE UNITS WILL BE CHANGED TO AFFORD THEM GREATER AUTONOMY; THEY WILL NOT BE WHOLLY OWNED OR OPERATED BY STATE.

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3. CONSERVATIVE REACTION: MEANTIME, FARMERS PLANNING A MEETING JANUARY 11 IN BRAGA TO PROTEST ABUSES OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM HAVE BEEN TALKING TOUGH. SOME SPONSORS WENT SO FAR AS TO THREATEN A "FOOD BLOCKADE" OF LISBON IF LOPES CARDOSO DOES NOT MEET THEIR DEMANDS.

4. COMMENT: THE KEY PERSONNEL CHANGES IN THE AGRARIAN REFORM CENTERS, TOGETHER WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF THE STUDY COMMISSION WHICH WILL WORK DIRECTLY WITH THE MINISTER, ARE FURTHER EVIDENCE OF LOPES CARDOSO'S DETERMINATION TO REASSERT HIS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY OVER THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM. THESE STEPS FOLLOW THE EFFECTIVE BUREAUCRATIC ISOLATION OF THE COMMUNIST SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AGRARIAN RESTRUCTURING THROUGH THE JAN 5 THREE PARTY AGREEMENT AND CREATION OF A SUBSECRETARIAT RESPONSIBLE TO THE MINISTER.
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